Submission of Statement

Emily Ogle [eogle@rossier.usc.edu]

Attached is a statement for the September 16th hearing. The Statement is from USC Center for Urban Education Co-Directors and Professors Dr. Estela Mara Bensimon and Dr. Alicia C. Dowd.

Emily

Emily Ogle | Operations and Communications Manager
Center for Urban Education | Rossier School of Education | University of Southern California
Waite Phillips Hall 702 | Los Angeles, CA 90089
w: 213.740.2799

eogle@rossier.usc.edu | cue.usc.edu | facebook | twitter

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CENTER FOR URBAN EDUCATION

Statement on

Governor's Awards for Innovation in Higher Education

By
Estela Mara Bensimon

Professor and Co-Director
Center for Urban Education
Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California

and

Alicia C. Dowd

Associate Professor and Co-Director
Center for Urban Education
Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California

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GENERAL REMARKS

We applaud the governor's decision to allocate additional funds to California's colleges and universities through the **Governor's Awards for Innovation in Higher Education**. The awards will support initiatives that colleges have put in place to resolve the challenges of inequality in degree completion, exceedingly low rates of success in remedial courses, and stagnant transfer rates. Numerous interventions—some complementary and some revealing a scatter shot approach—are being tested in California's three public sectors of higher education. It makes sense to provide support for initiatives that reflect the best thinking of individuals within the institutions, and to encourage alignment with those efforts, rather than imposing accountability-based standardized solutions that at best elicit rituals of compliance.

As academic organizations, colleges and universities have unique characteristics that make them far more responsive to incentives that reward creativity, respect the diversity of institutional missions and purposes, and support academic freedom. In the last decade public higher education, nationally, has been taxed with increased bureaucratic accountability requirements and performance-based funding formulas to increase their degree production. However, accountability measures of this kind only rarely spur creative institutional change. More often current systems of accountability and performance funding turn the attention of institutions away from exploration and experimentation in the delivery of undergraduate education. While the majority of states are following a cookie-cutter policy approach to the college attainment agenda, the governor's prize shows that California is not susceptible to group-think, instead we have come up with a model that mines the intellectual richness and creativity within our public colleges and universities.

The governor's prize is a welcome innovation as an incentive and reward for comprehensive reforms that are internally driven and have gained momentum within institutions. However, the governor's prize has a serious flaw. The prize requirements and application materials do not address the most serious threat to California's economic, social, and political well-being: the growing inequality that is evident in disparities in college attendance and graduation rates among Latinos, Blacks, American Indians, and some Asian populations, as well as low income and immigrant students.

The Award is surprisingly silent about the most urgent educational problem faced by California: the dismal low rate of college degree attainment among youth and adults from poor and immigrant communities, as well as historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups, of which Blacks, Latinos, Southeast Asians, Native and Pacific Islanders and Native Americans are the most severely impacted. The materials that describe the Award objectives, application requirements, and evaluation criteria do not explicitly ask applicants to explain the ways in which their innovation addresses the growing inequality in college attainment and success.

To not foreground the urgency for closing the gaps in degree attainment among California's most poor and least educated populations is at best a missed opportunity and at worst negligent.

As California looks into the coming decade and considers how to prepare the state's system of higher education to meet the needs of a rapidly changing population, ensuring greater equity in educational attainment must be a priority. Inequity in higher education participation and attainment will reduce the proportion of college-educated adults, which in turn will have detrimental effects on the state's economy, workforce preparation, and the quality of life of aging baby-boomers, as well as to our aspirations to be a society that provides equal opportunities regardless of race and socioeconomic status.

Currently, California's educational system—from high school to postsecondary education—retains Latinas, Latinos, and African American students at about half the rate of whites and Asians. The disparities between groups are the greatest at the baccalaureate level. Studies show that transfer is the most popular educational goal for California community college students, but currently, very few of these students actually transfer to a 4-year institution. Because California demographic projections show that Latinas, Latinos, and Asians will comprise more than half of California's working population (ages 25 - 64) within the next decade, efforts to increase the number of college degrees earned by these racial/ethnic groups are essential in order for the state to remain economically competitive and to sustain its tax base.

The Governor's Innovation Award can be the catalyst for educational equity that California so urgently needs. In that spirit, the Center for Urban Education at the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California makes the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 1: ADD EQUITY AS THE FOURTH PRIORITY OF THE INNOVATIONS AWARDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION.
The background information states that the Innovation Awards in Higher Education "… recognizes California community colleges, California State University (CSU) campuses, and University of California (UC) campuses that change existing policies, practices, or systems to achieve the following priorities:

- Significantly increase the number of bachelor's degrees awarded.
- Allow students to complete bachelor's degrees within four years after beginning higher education.
- Ease transfer through the state's education system by better recognizing learning that occurs across the state's education segments and elsewhere."

It is important that the Governor communicate that California's growing educational inequality is a serious threat to the well-being of all citizens and that institutions that are attempting to close the gaps in college attainment will be rewarded and supported.

Therefore CUE recommends **that a fourth priority be added to the purpose of the Innovations Awards in Higher Education**. Additionally, awards should be made based on the extent to which applications address the attainment of equity specifically.

- Significantly reduce the gaps in college access and graduation rates for the most educationally disadvantaged populations, including Latinos and Latinas, African Americans, Native Americans, and Southeast Asians, and Asian-Pacific Islanders as well as low-income and immigrant students.

RECOMMENDATION 2: DESIGNATE "EQUITY" AS THE SECOND MOST IMPORTANT ITEM THAT WILL BE USED TO RANK THE QUALITY OF APPLICATIONS.

The application materials indicate that "Staff will rank submitted applications based the following order of priorities, giving more weight to the top priority and less to the subsequent priorities" (Meeting Agenda, Committee on Meeting Awards for Innovation in Higher Education, p. 5, September, 16, 2014).

CUE recommends that Equity be added to the list of priorities and that it is designated as the second priority in the evaluation of applications.

(1) Innovations section: top priority
(2) Equity (new priority)
(3) Sustainability section: second priority
(4) Context section: third priority
(5) Evaluation section fourth priority

RECOMMENDATION 3: ADD TO THE LIST OF "NEW EFFORTS" ON P. 1 OF THE APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS, THE FOLLOWING TWO EFFORTS:

The application materials (Awards for Innovation in Higher Education, Application Instructions, p. 1) indicate that "the awards will recognize institutions that have initiated creative changes that can be replicated by other institutions and scaled broadly. Campuses may undertake a variety of new efforts, such as:

- Strengthening and streamlining pathways between K-12 schools, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, and others.
- Implementing more effective approaches to remedial education.
- Designing new instructional strategies or delivery methods that will improve student learning and increase the rate at which students complete courses.

- Expanding the capacity of "bottleneck" courses that students need to complete to graduate but often cannot access due to existing enrollment constraints.
- Forming cohorts or special classes to improve students' college-going skills and increase retention.
- Providing more opportunities for students to earn credit toward their degrees for knowledge and skills gained outside of traditional classrooms, such as on the job, in the military, or through independent study.
- Encouraging student behaviors demonstrated to lead to more successful outcomes.
- Using technology to improve the sharing of information across institutions or segments to improve student success.
- Rethinking instructor workload and course offerings to focus human resources in ways that meet the needs of students.
- Implementing smarter business and operational practices to reduce institutional costs.
- Better managing existing space and developing creative alternatives to address facility needs.

The following two recommendations should be added to this list.

- **Redesigning institutional practices to more effectively serve first-generation, low-income, immigrant, and underserved racial/ethnic groups.**
- **Developing faculty competence to adapt their teaching to the changing demographic of the student composition.**

RECOMMENDATION 4: CHANGES IN APPLICATION ITEMS AND LANGUAGE:

The application items listed on pp. 5-7 ask that applications address 10 items distributed into four areas: Context, Innovations, Sustainability, and Evaluation. In order to ensure that applicants resolve to address inequality in higher education opportunities and outcomes, CUE is suggesting the following changes to application items. The table below shows on the left side the exact language in the application instructions and in bold on the right hand side we offer additions to make the focus on equity explicit.

APPLICATION ITEMS WITH RECOMMENDED REVISIONS

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Context

1. Please describe specific programmatic or institutional goals set by the participants in this application and how achieving these goals ultimately will increase the number of bachelor's degrees awarded,	1. Please describe specific programmatic or institutional goals set by the participants in this application and how achieving these goals ultimately will increase the number of bachelor's degrees awarded,

GOVERNOR'S CURRENT VERSION	CENTER FOR URBAN EDUCATION PROPOSED REVISIONS
allow students to complete bachelor's degrees within four years, and/or ease transfer. Please describe when and how these goals were developed and how they are used on an ongoing basis. *(1 page maximum.)*	allow students to complete bachelor's degrees within four years, and/or ease transfer. **Please specifically discuss how programmatic and institutional goals will close equity gaps in degree attainment for low income, immigrant, and racial/ethnic groups.** Please describe when and how these goals were developed and how they are used on an ongoing basis. *(1 page maximum.)*
A strong application will demonstrate clear, well-established goals that are aligned with the Innovation Award program's priorities and used to guide changes to policies, practices, and/or systems.	*A strong application will demonstrate clear, well-established goals,* ***focused on achieving more equitable educational outcomes among California's growing non-white population,*** *that are aligned with the Innovation Award program's priorities and used to guide changes to policies, practices, and/or systems.*
2. Please provide a statistical profile of the students you serve and an analysis of the factors that impact the ability of your students to earn bachelor's degrees, graduate within four years, and/or transfer. Please note which factors you believe can be impacted by changes to policies, practices, or systems. *(1 page maximum.)*	2. Please provide a statistical profile of the students you serve, **disaggregated by race and ethnicity as well,** and an analysis of the factors that impact the ability of your students, **by race and ethnicity,** to earn bachelor's degrees, graduate within four years, and/or transfer. Please note which factors you believe can be impacted by changes to policies, practices, or systems. *(1 page maximum.)*
A strong application will demonstrate a thoughtful analysis, based on credible evidence, of the factors that impede students' progress and the applicant's role in addressing those factors.	*A strong application will demonstrate a thoughtful* ***equity-focused*** *analysis, based on credible evidence, of the factors that impede students' progress and the applicant's role in addressing those factors.*
3. Please describe key policies, practices, and/or systems in place prior to January 10, 2014, that were initiated to achieve the goals identified in Item 1. Please describe the impact of these policies, practices, or systems, to date, and provide evidence of that impact. *(2 pages maximum. You may include additional supporting materials in an appendix labeled*	3. Please describe key policies, practices, and/or systems in place prior to January 10, 2014, that were initiated to achieve the goals identified in Item 1. Please describe the impact of these policies, practices, or systems, to date, and provide evidence of that impact **for those student populations that experience the greatest gaps in degree attainment** *(2 pages*

GOVERNOR'S CURRENT VERSION	CENTER FOR URBAN EDUCATION PROPOSED REVISIONS
Appendix B, limited to 10 pages maximum.)	*maximum. You may include additional supporting materials in an appendix labeled Appendix B, limited to 10 pages maximum.)*
A strong application will demonstrate a record of actions that are innovative, effective, and aligned to the applicant's goals.	*A strong application will demonstrate a record of actions that are innovative, effective,* **intent on remedying the growing inequality in educational outcomes***, and aligned to the applicant's goals.*

Innovation

4. Please describe key changes to policies, practices, and/or systems that you have initiated since January 10, 2014 that are intended to achieve the goals identified in Item 1. Please explain why you think the changes you have initiated will achieve those goals. Additionally, please discuss how these changes will impact the average cost to award a bachelor's degree, considering costs borne by the state, the application participants, and students, as well as the magnitude of that impact. You may present evidence, such as research or outcomes of similar changes made at other institutions, to support your claim. *(6 pages maximum. You may include additional supporting materials in an appendix labeled Appendix C, limited to 20 pages maximum.)*	4. Please describe key changes to policies, practices, and/or systems that you have initiated since January 10, 2014 that are intended to achieve the goals identified in Item 1. Please explain why you think the changes you have initiated will achieve those goals, **including a significant reduction in unequal educational outcomes for specific populations.** Additionally, please discuss how these changes will impact the average cost to award a bachelor's degree, considering costs borne by the state, the application participants, and students, as well as the magnitude of that impact. **Also discuss how you have assessed the impact of these changes on specific populations.** You may present evidence, such as research or outcomes of similar changes made at other institutions, to support your claim. *(6 pages maximum. You may include additional supporting materials in an appendix labeled Appendix C, limited to 20 pages maximum.)*
A strong application will demonstrate a coherent set of innovative and replicable changes guided by the goals described in Item 1 and linked to the challenges described in Item 2 that can be expected to have a significant impact and to reduce the costs to award a bachelor's degree based on credible evidence presented by the applicant	*A strong application will demonstrate a coherent set of innovative and replicable changes guided by the goals described in Item 1 and linked to the challenges described in Item 2 that can be expected to have a significant impact* **on reducing inequalities in degree attainment,** *and to reduce the costs to award a bachelor's degree based on credible evidence presented by the applicant*

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Evaluation

9. Please describe how you will evaluate—both quantitatively and qualitatively—whether the changes described in your response to Item 4 will achieve the goals identified in your response to Item 1, including at least three specific quantitative measures you will monitor regularly. Your response should include both measures that can be observed and used to gauge progress in the near term (fewer than four years) and measures that will reflect progress over the long term (four years or more). *(1 page maximum.)*	9. Please describe how you will evaluate—both quantitatively and qualitatively—whether the changes described in your response to Item 4 will achieve the goals identified in your response to Item 1, including at least three specific quantitative measures you will monitor regularly. **Please specify how these measures will monitor progress toward the reduction of inequality in degree attainment.** Your response should include both measures that can be observed and used to gauge progress in the near term (fewer than four years) and measures that will reflect progress over the long term (four years or more). *(1 page maximum.)*
A strong application will demonstrate a thoughtful, systematic approach to evaluating progress toward each identified goal, using quantitative measures that reasonably evaluate progress toward those goals and qualitative judgments	*A strong application will demonstrate a thoughtful, systematic approach to evaluating progress toward each identified goal,* ***using quantitative measures that are disaggregated by race and ethnicity and other indicators to gauge progress toward equitable outcomes*** *and reasonably evaluate progress toward those goals and qualitative judgments*
10. Please list your target outcomes for each academic year through 2018-19 for the measures identified in your response to Item 9, taking into account the changes described in this application. Please provide the most recent baseline measures for each target outcome for each application participant and identify which academic year that data reflects. You may use a table to reflect this data. Please also provide a narrative that explains how you chose your targets, including assumptions used and evidence you have to support those assumptions. Please identify your data source or provide enough information about how the data is generated to allow other entities to replicate the measures. *(2 pages maximum, including any table produced. You may include additional supporting materials in an appendix labeled Appendix G, limited to 10 pages maximum.)*	10. Please list your target outcomes, **specifying those populations who experience the greatest inequalities in degree attainment,** for each academic year through 2018-19 for the measures identified in your response to Item 9, taking into account the changes described in this application. Please provide the most recent baseline measures for each target outcome for each application participant and identify which academic year that data reflects. You may use a table to reflect this data. Please also provide a narrative that explains how you chose your targets, including assumptions used and evidence you have to support those assumptions. Please identify your data source or provide enough information about how the data is generated to allow other entities to replicate the measures. *(2 pages maximum, including any table produced. You may include additional supporting materials in an appendix*

Governor's Current Version	Center for Urban Education Proposed Revisions
	labeled Appendix G, limited to 10 pages maximum.)
A strong application will demonstrate a thoughtful approach to setting ambitious targets informed by a realistic assessment of data.	*A strong application will demonstrate a thoughtful approach to setting ambitious targets informed by a realistic assessment of data **and the responsibility of public higher education to deliver undergraduate education equitably.***

CONCLUSION

Given California's growing economic dependency on a significant larger number of college educated African Americans, Latinos, American Indians, as well as disadvantaged Asian American populations, leaving equity out of the Awards program is a serious oversight. The following figures show graduation rates in the aggregate (Figure 1) and then again disaggregated (Figure 2). As Figure 2 makes clear, aggregate data hide very large disparities in graduation rates for African Americans and Latinos/as. Aggregate data defeat the main purpose of performance measures, which is the assessment of institutional effectiveness.

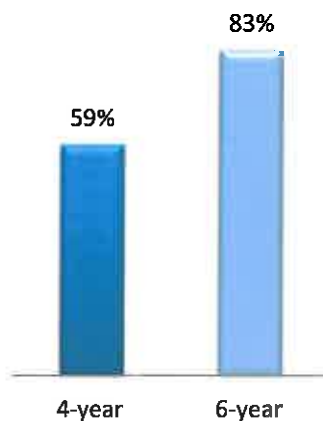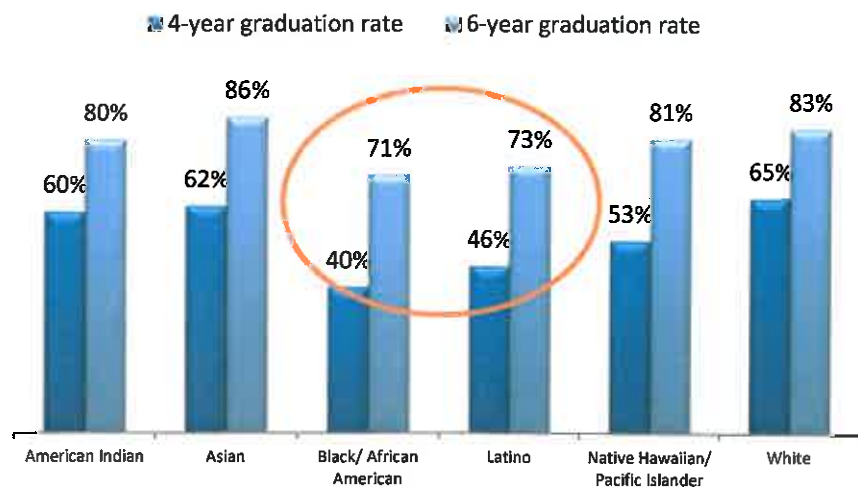**Figure 1: Completion Measures for UC System-wide Graduation Rates**

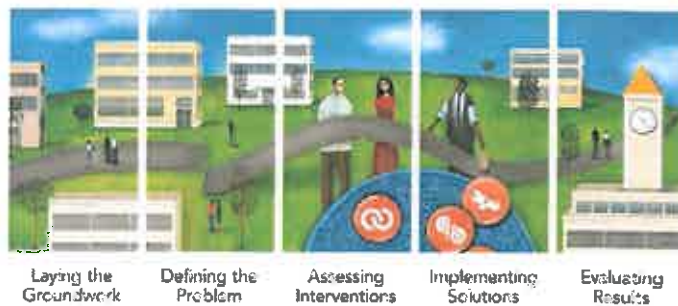**Figure 2: UC System-Wide Graduation Rates, Disaggregated**

The very different portraits of student graduation rates portrayed by these two figures demonstrate the centrality of the two-fold thrust of our recommendations. First, it is essential to focus on equity to improve the institutional effectiveness of California's colleges and

universities. Second, it is essential to require the use of data disaggregated by race and ethnicity to measure and monitor the effectiveness of educational innovations that aspire to contribute to the public good of our increasingly diverse state.

From our experience facilitating the Equity Scorecard action research process at colleges and universities throughout the country for more than a decade—see About CUE below for further information—we are confident that these recommendations, if adopted, will strengthen the value and impact of the Governor's Awards for Innovation in Higher Education.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR URBAN EDUCATION

The Center for Urban Education (CUE), located at the University of Southern California in the Rossier School of Education, works with campuses and systems to involve practitioners from across departments, divisions, and areas of responsibility in processes of deliberate examination of student outcomes data disaggregated by race and ethnicity. Since its beginning in1999, CUE has worked with over eighty institutions in ten states. CUE's outcomes based model of institutional change, known as the *Equity Scorecard* has been implemented in collaboration with large systems of higher education, universities, and community colleges in California, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Nevada. Find out more at cue.usc.edu.

| Laying the Groundwork | Defining the Problem | Assessing Interventions | Implementing Solutions | Evaluating Results |

The Center for Urban Education engages practitioners in a facilitated action research process. Through our process, practitioners learn to reframe low rates of college completion as a problem of institutional effectiveness in serving students. By focusing on what they can and need to change in themselves and their institutions, rather than on the deficits that prevent underrepresented students from succeeding, it is possible for faculty, staff, and leaders to approach the challenge of improving equity in college attainment, as a *solvable problem of professional practice.*

CO-DIRECTORS
Dr. Estela Mara Bensimon bensimon@usc.edu; Dr. Alicia C. Dowd adowd@usc.edu

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Estela Mara Bensimon, Ed.D., is a professor of higher education at the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education and Co-Director of the Center for Urban Education, which she founded in 1999. Bensimon applies her knowledge on organizational learning, leadership, and equity at colleges and universities in several states. With a singular focus on increasing equity in higher education outcomes for students of color, she developed the Equity Scorecard—a process for using inquiry to drive changes in institutional practice and culture.

She is the principal investigator of Equity in Excellence in Colorado, a place-based project funded by the Ford Foundation and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. She was also the principal investigator for the Equity Scorecard Initiative in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. In 2007 Professor Bensimon received a grant from the Ford Foundation to organize a series of institutes on the use of critical research methods for over 100 young scholars of equity in higher education.

Bensimon has published extensively about equity, organizational learning, practitioner inquiry, and change; and her articles have appeared in journals such as the *Review of Higher Education, Journal of Higher Education, Liberal Education, and Harvard Educational Review*. Her most recent publications include a coedited book *Confronting Equity Issues on Campus: Implementing the Equity Scorecard in Theory and Practice.* She is also the coeditor of *Critical Perspectives on Race and Equity,* a special issue of the *Review of Higher Education*

Bensimon was president of the Association for the Study of Higher Education in 2005–2006, and vice-president of the American Education Research Association, Division on Postsecondary Education in 1992–1994. She has served on the boards of the American Association for Higher Education and the Association of American Colleges and Universities. She is the current chair of AERA's Social Justice and Action Committee. In 2011 she was inducted as an AERA Fellow in recognition of excellence in research. She is a recipient of the USC Mellon Mentoring Award for faculty and Distinguished Service Award from the Association for the Study of Higher Education.

Bensimon was **associate** dean of the USC Rossier School of Education from 1996 to 2000 and was a Fulbright Scholar to Mexico in 2002. She earned her doctorate in higher education from Teachers College, Columbia University.

Alicia C. Dowd, Ph.D., is an associate professor of higher education at the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education and Co-Director of the Center for Urban Education (CUE). Her research focuses on political–economic issues of racial/ethnic equity in postsecondary outcomes, organizational learning and effectiveness, accountability, and the factors affecting student attainment in higher education. Since joining CUE in 2006, she has been instrumental in developing the Equity Scorecard, CUE's signature action research process. Dowd utilizes cultural historical activity theory and critical race theory to design and evaluate the impact of action research processes and tools.

Dowd is currently the principal investigator of a study of organizational learning through data use under conditions of accountability in higher education, which is funded by the Spencer Foundation. Previously, she was the principal investigator of several national studies of institutional effectiveness, equity, community college transfer, benchmarking, and assessment, including a multiyear National Science Foundation–funded study of *Pathways to STEM Bachelor's and Graduate Degrees for Hispanic Students and the Role of Hispanic Serving Institutions.* The results of these studies have been published in numerous journals including the *Review of Educational Research, Harvard Educational Review, Review of Higher Education, Research in Higher Education,* and *Teacher's College Record.*

Dowd is a frequent speaker on the topics of diversity and equity. She has provided Congressional testimony on diversity in STEM to the House subcommittee on Research and Science Education and addressed the topic of "Developing supportive STEM community college to 4-year college and university transfer ecosystems" at a convening of the National Academies of Sciences. Dowd was awarded her doctorate by Cornell University, where she studied the social foundations of education, labor economics, and curriculum and instruction.

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